GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:661
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New Catering Policy
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Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the salient features of new catering policy in the Railways;

(b) whether this policy has adequately addressed various complaints received regarding the deteriorating quality of food being served in various trains;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken to improve the quality of food in Railways?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)

(a): The Catering Policy 2010, presently in force for management of catering services over Indian Railways was issued in July 2010. The salient features of this Policy include (i) Shifting management and monitoring of all catering services (except Food Plaza, Food Courts and Fast Food Units) from Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to Zonal Railways. (ii) IRCTC made responsible for managing the catering services at Food Plazas, Food Courts and Fast Food Units. (iii) Zonal Railways to have an effective and transparent contract awarding, management and monitoring system as per provisions of Standard Bid Document. (iv) Zonal Railways are responsible for strengthening supervision and monitoring of catering services for maintaining quality and hygiene of the food served to passengers and have been empowered to take corrective actions including imposition of fines on licensees to mitigate passengers complaints.

However, in a paradigm shift, as announced in Rail Budget 2016-17, it has been decided to give back the catering services to IRCTC in a phased manner with unbundling catering services by creating a distinction primarily between food preparation and food distribution. It has also been decided that there will be no complete handing over of catering service by IRCTC to private licensees. Zonal Railways will have powers of supervision and monitoring to ensure quality food is served to passengers.

(b) and (c): Improvement of catering services is an on-going process. In its endeavour to provide quality and hygienic food to the passengers, Railways have developed and operationalized an institutionalized mechanism for monitoring of quality and hygiene of catering services through regular inspections at various levels. The passenger satisfaction levels are also regularly monitored through direct feedback and other means to address catering complaints.

(d): The steps taken to improve the quality of food in Railways inter-alia include: (i) Introduction of station based e-catering at all A1 and A category stations for widening the range of options available to passengers for ordering food of their choice. (ii) Introduction of precooked food ('ready to eat' meals) in the range of options available to passengers. (iii) Operation of centralized Catering Service Monitoring Cell (CSMC) (toll free number 1800-111-321) for prompt redressal of passenger grievances relating to the catering activities and real time assistance to travelling public. (iv) Imposition of penalties in case of deficiencies detected in services. (v) Operation of all India Helpline (No.138) for rail-users to lodge complaints/suggestions regarding food and catering services (vi) A Twitter handle with the address @IRCATERING has also been made operational to cater to the complaints/suggestions with regard to catering services.
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